

# ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE

## DIMENSIONS OF THOUGHT

*Edited By*  
THAMEEM USHAMA

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IIUM Press

# ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE *Dimensions of Thought*

*Edited by*  
**Thameem Ushama**



**IIUM Press**

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EMAIL: iiumprinting@yahoo.com



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# Divine Transcendence and the Issue of Anthropomorphism in Islamic Theology

*Mohd Farid Mohd Shahrān*

## Introduction

It goes without saying that as the religion which emphasizes Divine Unity (*Tawhīd*), Islam places the concept of divine transcendence at a central position in its understanding of God. Scripturally, divine transcendence is emphasized in a number of Qur'ānic verses which affirm the 'otherness' of God and denies the resemblance of God to anything other than Him. The most important verse which refers to this aspect is the affirmative, "Nothing is like unto Him" (*laysa ka mithlihi shayy*).<sup>1</sup> This verse gains utmost importance among the *mutakallimūn* as a proof for the absolute transcendence of God, especially from the anthropomorphic perspective. Commenting on this verse, al-Rāzī one of the important Ash'arite theologians remarks, "scholars of *tawhīd*, ancient and recent, argue on the basis of this verse against the [errant] views that portray [the essence of] God as corporeal (*jism*), composed of organs and parts and that He exists (*ḥāṣilan*) in place and direction."<sup>2</sup> Other emphatic verses stressing the uniqueness of God and the denial of the resemblance of divine essence with other anthropomorphic qualities are those in *sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* which describes God as One and thus contrary to the Christian belief of God the "father" having a "begotten-son," and